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REV. JOHN W. WADMAN DELIVERS STRONG SERMON ON TEMPERANCE

Public opinion, which at one time made light and mirth of drunkenness, has changed in the last two decades. It is seeing it with new eyes, and eyes alert to the evil of drink, and the duty of society to suppress it.

These are points made by Rev. John W. Wadman, D.D., in his sermon last night at the First Methodist Episcopal church, the subject being "A Live Issue." A large congregation heard Dr. Wadman's powerful plea for total abstinence. He made a case against the so-called moderate drinker, or occasional drinker, and declared that such drinkers were more pernicious to society—"far more so than the example of those who through excess have gone down into poverty and disgrace."

It was altogether one of the most impressive sermons on temperance heard here for many weeks. His firm convictions, his abundance of facts to support them, put the stamp of sincerity and earnestness on what he said.

He said in part: "In view, then, of this great fact, the relation of public opinion to life, humane life especially, it must be apparent to every careful observer of current events that under the influence of that of which we now speak, the temperance question is this very day assuming a moral, political and scientific form such as the most ardent philanthropist of the past century would never have dared believe possible. The voice of public opinion: Life is precious. Intemperance hurts life. Life must be protected and must be preserved. Abolished, did I say. Such unquestionably seems to be the decree, since no other policy save that of the prohibition of the manufacture, sale and use of alcoholic drink will ever, it is believed, effectively and permanently remedy the evil.

"The policy of license of the traffic by the government has had a long and faithful trial. In recent years, in no direction of reform has dissatisfaction as regards any wrong been manifesting itself more persistently than in this. So that in Switzerland, Norway, Sweden, Great Britain, United States and in Canada, prohibition is becoming more and more a prominent leading question. Under free, intelligent, untrammelled discussion, engaging the best thought of this day's pulpits, press and bar, moral sentiment is rapidly crystallizing into the unshaken conviction that the traffic in and consumption of alcoholic drinks is an unmitigated evil which ought not to be endured any longer. In corroboration of this statement we can cite the instance of the supreme court of the United States, having publicly declared that, since the statistics of every state show a greater amount of crime and misery attributed to the use of ardent spirits obtained at retail liquor saloons than to any other source, it is the opinion of this court: 'There is no inherent right in a citizen of the United States to sell intoxicating liquors. To do so is not a privilege of a citizen of the United States.'

"Here, then, is the conviction of the highest judicial authority in America put on record and publicly declared. Prohibited by Government. Moreover, the federal government, under the dominance of the same enlightened conviction, has prohibited the traffic of liquor in Indian country, in certain portions of the territories, in military forts and reservations, in the United States navy, in the national capital, in the United States soldiers' homes and in other specified areas under federal control.

"Nor have state governments lagged behind in this tremendous movement under the direction and control of an enlightened public conscience. Nine states—Maine, Kansas, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Mississippi, Tennessee and West Virginia, with an aggregate population of nearly 15,000,000—have gone completely dry and 31 others are partially so and heading rapidly in the direction of being wholly so. In a word, more than 47,000,000 of the people of the United States are at this very moment living under prohibition and this represents more than 70 percent of the entire area of the nation.

Statistics Tell Story. Moreover, actual statistics in our recent federal census report show conclusively that prohibition does prohibit. Here is the statement recently made by Congressman Ernest C. Livingston before the house in session: 'The number of paupers per 100,000 population in nine prohibition states is 46; in the 17 near-prohibition states, 54; in the 13 partially prohibition states, 123; and in the nine license states, 129. While the number of insane in public hospitals per 100,000 population in the nine prohibition states is 119; in the 17 near-prohibition states, 150; in the 13 partially license states, 242; and in the nine license states, 276.'

"Are not these figures startling, even appalling? No state of the union has given prohibition so far a trial as has Kansas. Today that state presents the unparalleled record of almost two-thirds of the counties of the state without a single prisoner serving sentence for crime while in some of the country a jury to try a criminal case has not been called in 10 years.

"Twenty or 25 years ago one heard the constant cry: 'Leave the saloons alone. We need the revenue. Close the saloons and our taxes will increase.' Today, clear-headed, hard-headed business men are picking up their memorandum books and finding that since it costs this country two and a half billions of dollars in intoxicating drink and an account of the drink traffic, two and a half billions more to maintain police courts, jails, penitentiaries, orphanages, hospitals, and asylums, why not abolish the traffic and save this five billions

and more for the revenues? Moreover, if we only had one-half this amount for the improvement of labor and the development of skill, then property values would rise rapidly and business would increase tremendously since the masses of the laboring class, who now spend their substance for that which is not bread (except it be the bread of sorrow) would have money for food and clothes and comforts.

"Again, public opinion has taken on a more intelligent conviction regarding the habit of moderate drinking prevailing among the more intelligent classes of our citizenship. It was not long ago when a gentleman of the legal profession remarked in my hearing that 25 years ago it was not considered very bad form, certainly not a disreputable thing, for a lawyer to stagger along the street, under the influence of the ardent or for even a judge to take a 'nip' from the bottle in the chambers at the recess of court. Would public opinion stand for this today? We fear not.

"It is now really bad form for officers of the army to drink, remarked an army general not long ago in a conversation regarding the liquor traffic, and 'we do not now hesitate at all to court-martial our officers for drunkenness.'

"This means that moderate drinking is not good form, not good style. In other words, it is not in accord with public opinion for fashion is only another term for public opinion, and public opinion is the energizing power back of law. There may be laws against duelling but it may be quite fashionable for two men to pick a quarrel and fight a duel. In all cases then we need fashion or custom or public opinion to be on the side of law, at the back of law and glad are we in being able to state that public opinion is getting squarely and intelligently and conscientiously back of all laws whose purpose is to curtail and abolish the evils of the liquor traffic. Moderate drinking is, therefore, bad style. This being so, we shall soon observe more and more the effects of the power of example for if the rich turn down their champagne glass in their banquetting halls, the poor man will begin to turn away from the gin-mills and the gin-mills will go out of business for lack of patronage.

"It was noteworthy as well as praiseworthy that at the recent public receptions given in our city to two distinguished federal officials the toasts were drunk in cold water. This is the intelligent crystallization of public opinion.

"Again, men are asking today the question, 'Am I my brother's keeper?' with an earnestness never before evinced. Am I, as a moderate drinker, hurtful in any sense in my influence so far as other men are concerned? True, I may never become an inebriate. I know where to begin, how long to continue and when to stop. But there are others who do not know, who cannot know. Human nature shows a wide difference in organic susceptibility. One inhalation of chloroform puts me to sleep while the same quantity makes you wild. One glass of liquor may be medicine to me, the same quantity to you a poison. It means 20 glasses more. It means drunkenness, debauchery, poverty, suffering and crime. Therefore, (and isn't this a rational, philosophic conclusion of good logic?) as a moderate drinker I shall cease to cause the weaker brother to offend. I shall drink no more wine for conscience sake.

"And, oh, for the sake of the boys, your boy and my boy, remembering the tremendous force of example, may I not plead for total abstinence on the part of all moderate drinkers? After all it is the example of the safe and sure, intelligent, prosperous, popular citizen in his habits of moderate drinking that is so pernicious—far more so than the example of those who through excess have gone down into poverty and disgrace.

"Again, the crystallization of public opinion has brought about a decided change in regard to the old objection that teetotalism invalidates personal liberty.

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